

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8914

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SUBJ: RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NWFP

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 1583; B. ISLAMABAD 1473

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM CONSUL PESHAWAR:

SUMMARY: IMPOSITION OF GOVERNOR'S RULE IN NWFP HAS BEEN FOLLOWED BY REMOVAL OF CHIEF SECRETARY AND INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE. VICE CHANCELLOR OF PESHAWAR UNIVERSITY HAS ALSO RESIGNED ALTHOUGH PRIMIN REPORTEDLY URGED HIM TO REMAIN IN POST. DESPITE GOVERNOR'S RULE PPP AND MUSLIM LEAGUE POLITICIANS ARE ALREADY MANEUVERING FOR INCLUSION IN NEXT CABINET. THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION ABOUT SHERPAO'S SUCCESSOR AS PPP LEADER AND ABOUT GOVERNMENT'S CANDIDATE TO CONTEST FOR HIS VACANT SEAT IN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY. PRIMIN REPORTEDLY TROUBLED ABOUT CONDITION OF PROVINCIAL PPP AND APPEARS UNCERTAIN HOW TO STRENGTHEN IT. MANY PESHAWARIS APPEAR CONCERNED ABOUT RECENT SHARP ATTACKS ON AFGHANISTAN.

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END SUMMARY.

1. PRIMIN BHUTTO SPENT THREE DAYS IN PESHAWAR THIS PAST WEEK MEETING WITH OFFICIALS AND PRO-GOVERNMENT POLITICIANS IN EFFORT TO ASSESS POLITICAL SITUATION IN AFTERMATH OF SHERPAO ASSASSINATION AND BANNING OF NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY(NAP). MAJOR DECISION REACHED WHILE HE WAS IN FRONTIER WAS TO DISMISS THE NWFP CABINET AND IMPOSE GOVERNOR'S RULE ON PROVINCE. WHILE THIS ACTION CAME AS SURPRISE TO OUSTED MINISTERS AND MOST PESHAWARIS, IT HAS BEEN GENERALLY WELL RECEIVED BY POPULACE WHICH HAS GROWN TIRED OF MINISTERIAL INCOMPETENCE AND CORRUPTION.

2. IMPOSITION OF GOVERNOR'S RULE WAS FOLLOWED QUICKLY BY PRIMIN'S DECISION TO REMOVE TWO OTHER KEY OFFICIALS WHO HAD BECOME ASSOCIATED IN PUBLIC MIND WITH THE MINISTERIAL GOVERNMENT. CHIEF SECRETARY NUSRUM MINALLAH, LONG-TIME BHUTTO FAVORITE, WAS REPLACED BY FATEH MOHAMMAD BANDIAL, SECRETARY OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND FORMERLY CHIEF SECRETARY OF THE PUNJAB. INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE MIAN BASHIR AHMAD, A PUNJABI WHOSE NAPOLEONIC STRUTTING, ARROGANCE AND REPUTATION FOR RUTHLESSNESS HAD MADE HIM UNPOPULAR WITH LOCAL CITIZENS, WAS REPLACED BY THE RESPECTED YUSUF ORAKZAI, A PATHAN WHO WAS WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY WHEN HE SERVED AS CHAIRMAN OF THE PAKISTAN NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD IN 1973-74. ANOTHER OFFICIAL REPLACED WAS ABDUL ALI KHAN, VICE CHANCELLOR OF PESHAWAR UNIVERSITY. ACCORDING TO NUMEROUS RELIABLE REPORTS, PRIMIN BHUTTO HAD INITIALLY REFUSED TO ACCEPT HIS RESIGNATION, BUT THE VICE CHANCELLOR INSISTED ON BEING TRANSFERRED, ARGUING THAT HE COULD NOT IN GOOD CONSCIENCE REMAIN SINCE THE ASSASSINATION OF SHERPAO TOOK PLACE ON UNIVERSITY PREMISES. HIS SUCCESSOR REPORTEDLY IS SARDAR HIZBULLAH KHAN, CLOSE RELATIVE OF EX-CHIEF MINISTER GANDAPUR, WHO HAS BEEN SERVING AS CHAIRMAN OF NWFP PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION.

3. WHILE PRIMIN HAS PUSHED OUSTED MINISTERS INTO POLITICAL WILDERNESS--AT LEAST TEMPORARILY--HE HAS HONORED THREE OTHER POLITICIANS FROM PAKISTAN PEOPLES' LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PARTY AND MUSLIM LEAGUE BY SELECTING THEM TO BE ADVISORS TO THE GOVERNOR IN ADMINISTERING FRONTIER AFFAIRS FOR NEXT 90 DAYS. THE TWO PPP ADVISORS ARE GHULAM MOHAMMAD KHAN, VICE PRESIDENT OF PARTY, AND IFTIKHAR GILANI, JOINT SECRETARY. MUSLIM LEAGUE APPOINTEE IS VETERAN POLITICIAN FIDA MOHAMMAD KHAN. ANOTHER ADVISOR FROM RANKS OF MUSLIM LEAGUE IS EXPECTED TO BE APPOINTED IN NEXT FEW DAYS.

4. IN HOPEFUL ANTICIPATION THAT GOVERNOR'S RULE WILL BE LIFTED IN THREE MONTHS, MANY PPP AND MUSLIM LEAGUE MPAS ARE ALREADY MANEUVERING IN AN EFFORT TO INSURE THEIR SELECTION TO NEW CABINET. LOCAL POLITICIANS ARE ALSO KEENLY INTERESTED IN THE PESHAWAR CITY BYE-ELECTION (TO BE HELD SOME TIME IN NEAR FUTURE) TO FILL SEAT LEFT VACANT BY DEATH OF SHERPAO. IT IS STILL WIDELY BELIEVED THAT MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADER QAIYUM, WHO

HAS BEEN TRYING TO DOMINATE NEWS PAST WEEK WITH HIS ATTACKS ON THE NAP AND AFGHANS, IS EAGER TO ENTER CONTEST IN THIS CONSTITUENCY WHICH HE NARROWLY LOST IN 1970 WHEN THE NAP THREW ITS SUPPORT TO SHERPAO. AMONG SOPHISTICATED OBSERVERS, HOWEVER, THE PREVAILING VIEW NOW IS THAT BHUTTO IS DETERMINED TO KEEP QAIYUM IN ISLAMABAD AND DOES NOT WANT TO SEE HIM EMERGE AGAIN AS NWFP CHIEF MINISTER. MANY OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT GOVERNMENT'S CANDIDATE IN THIS ELECTION WILL BE EITHER PPP SECRETARY ALI HASSAN QAZILBASH OR NEWLY APPOINTED MUSLIM LEAGUE ADVISOR FIDA MOHAMMAD KHAN. NO ONE WOULD BE PARTICULARLY SURPRISED, HOWEVER, IF FORMER GOVERNOR ASLAM KHATTAK WERE BROUGHT BACK FROM IRAN TO CONTEST ELECTION. ALL REPORTS FROM PERSONS WHO MET WITH THE PRIMIN IN PESHAWAR WOULD SUGGEST THAT HE HAS NOT MADE ANY FIRM DECISION ABOUT TH ELECTION AND HAS NOT DECIDED WHO WILL REPLACED SHERPAO AS LEADER OF THE FRONTIER PPP. ACCORDING TO THESE REPORTS, THE PRIMIN IS TROUBLED BY THE CONDITION OF HIS PARTY IN THE NWFP AND APPEARS UNCERTAIN HOW TO INFUSE STRENGTH AND VITALITY INTO THE SHATTERED ORGANI-
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ZATION.

5. MOST PESHAWARIS HAVE BEEN SO COMPLETELY PREOCCUPIED THIS WEEK WITH THE RAPID SEQUENCE OF EVENTS ARRANGED BY PRIMIN THAT THEY HAVE HAD LITTLE TIME TO THINK VERY MUCH ABOUT THE NAP LEADERS LANGUISHING I QJAIL. CONSIDERABLE CONCERN HAS BEEN EXPRESSLY BY CONSULATE CONTACTS, HOWEVER, THAT BHUTTO'S DECISION TO IMPOSE GOVERNOR'S RULE WAS COUPLED WITH SUCH SHARP ATTACKS ON AFGHANISTAN. IN THEIR VIEW, IT IS NOT WISE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO MOUNT STRONG VERBAL OFFENSIVE AGAINST DAUD'S REGIME WHILE AT SAME TIME IT IS ATTEMPTING TO CRUSH THE NAP.
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